



NEWS RELEASE

December 12, 2002

Border Patrol Expands Search and Rescue Capabilities Along Southwest Border *BORSTAR Graduates New Search and Rescue Members*

TUCSON, Ariz. — The newest members of the Border Patrol Search Trauma and Rescue (BORSTAR) team graduated here this morning following a grueling five week academy that included training in skills ranging from search and rescue techniques, advanced first aid, rappelling and water survival.

The 23 graduates will increase manpower to BORSTAR teams in seven Border Patrol sectors – El Centro and San Diego, California; Yuma and Tucson, Arizona; Del Rio, Laredo, Marfa and McAllen, Texas. Three female Border Patrol agents are included in this graduating class. These are the first female agents joining the ranks of BORSTAR following its national inception. The expansion of BORSTAR was one of the agreements reached during the recent series of meetings between the U.S. and Mexico on bi-national efforts to promote border safety.

“The Border Patrol has always recognized that protecting the border includes an obligation to protect lives. With the graduation of these agents, we are better prepared to meet this obligation,” said Gustavo De La Viña, Chief of the U.S. Border Patrol.

Each BORSTAR agent is uniquely trained to conduct search and rescue operations in remote border areas and then provide the immediate medical assistance necessary to stabilize patients and transport them to areas more accessible to paramedics, helicopters and other advanced emergency medical services.

The expansion of BORSTAR teams also allows for the continuance of bi-national training with Mexico. Last fiscal year, team members shared their expertise with more than 200 Mexican law-enforcement officials increasing the total number trained to more than 1,000 since the inception of the Border Safety Initiative in 1998.

BORSTAR is part of the bi-national Border Safety Initiative launched four years ago. Under this initiative, Border Patrol agents have been working to educate the public about the dangers of illegal crossings, and to rescue those who fail to heed their warnings.

Since launching the initiative, Border Patrol agents have rescued more than 6,500 migrants from life-threatening situations, and others from less serious, yet still dangerous, circumstances.

~ USBP ~